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LETTER DATED 9 MAY 1994 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
CANADA TO THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AT GENEVA ADDRESSED TO
THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Written communication submitted by Pax Christi International,
a non-governmental organization in consultative status
(Category II)

The Secretary-General has received the following communication, which
is distributed in accordance with Economic and Social Council
resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[23 November 1994]

Pax Christi International warmly congratulates the Canadian Government
and thanks it for its initiative - could not others have taken it much
earlier? - to invite Member States to support its request for an emergency
meeting of the Commission on Human Rights concerning Rwanda.

The horror of the massacres perpetrated since 6 April 1994 made it urgent
to provide assistance to persons in danger and to activate the means and the
logistics capable of halting a genocide which had been long in preparation.
It could have been avoided or at least contained if the international
community had paid sufficient heed to the alarm signals sent out by several
non-governmental organizations, in particular the international mission of
inquiry which discovered several burial grounds in January 1993. At its
fiftieth session, the Commission did not feel it necessary to draw the
conclusions arising from the report on the visit to Rwanda by the Special

Rapporteur on summary executions, Mr. Bacré Waly Ndiaye. As early as April 1993, Mr. Ndiaye confirmed in his report on summary executions that the findings of the NGO international commission of inquiry were correct. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. José Ayala Lasso, must also be commended for the courage and sense of responsibility he showed by travelling to Rwanda at the beginning of May. His mission was not without risks, since the United Nations had - understandably but shockingly - withdrawn almost entirely from the country, abandoning its locally recruited staff.

The facts are clear and further discussion cannot change them. This is genocide. The report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Burundi and Rwanda, and all the information received and still to be submitted to this session of the Commission, call for effective action. In the first place, those in danger must be protected: those who are still at risk of being massacred as well as those who have managed to flee armed violence and are overcome along the roads or in the outlying camps by famine, sickness and lack of basic care.

It is a distressing euphemism to note that the United Nations has lost its credibility in the eyes of world public opinion. The Organization's failure to intervene in time in the former Yugoslavia has reduced it to hoping for peace only by exerting pressure on the victims to accept heavy concessions. Due to its failure to exert pressure in due time on President Habyarimana to disband the militias of the MRND and the CRD which his army was protecting, the United Nations has allowed built-up and exacerbated hatred and fear to explode into barbarism, resulting in the death of some 500,000 people in this very small country in the space of a few weeks.

It is time for the Governments that represent the peoples of this earth to pull themselves together, face up to their historic responsibilities and give the United Nations the means to perform the mission for which it was set up after the Holocaust.

The Commission on Human Rights, where peoples make their voice heard through the non-governmental organizations, must transmit to the Economic and Social Council clear and strong proposals which are not watered down and weakened in a search for consensus at any cost. Everyone must have the courage to assume his responsibilities.

Pax Christi International hopes that the Commission will unequivocally declare that the Genocide Convention which entered into force on 12 January 1951 is applicable to the inter-ethnic massacres in Rwanda and Burundi and that, consequently, persons responsible for, instigating or carrying out, either individually or collectively, the crimes that have taken place or are still to take place must be identified and punished.

This entails the appointment of a Special Rapporteur who should travel to the area as soon as possible with a team of advisers and observers to gather information on immediate protection measures to be taken to put an end to the genocide and obtain information enabling the culprits - particularly those at the highest level, regardless of the clan to which they belong - to be identified.

The Commission should decide to hold a second emergency session to consider the initial report of the Special Rapporteur and take the decisions which it requires. In the meantime, the High Commissioner might be invited to transmit the progress reports of the Special Rapporteur to all Member States and international institutions and bodies which he considers to be concerned by the measures to be taken.

The Commission will doubtless wish to request the Security Council, through the Economic and Social Council, to set up an international criminal court to try those responsible for the atrocities which constitute crimes against humanity. This court should have jurisdiction to deal with the inter-ethnic massacres in the Great Lakes region which are of the same origin.

The Security Council should also be called upon to establish a large-scale emergency programme for the benefit of the hundreds of thousands of individuals and families who, in order to escape from the genocide, have fled to the interior of the country and into neighbouring States, which are unable to provide them with the assistance that they vitally need.

Pax Christi International, which manifests its solidarity with all the victims, expresses its appreciation to all those - international civil servants, aid workers and missionaries - who have devoted their best efforts to the service of the Rwandese population and are seeing the fruits of their labour destroyed. Above all, it wishes to pay an admiring tribute to the courage of those who, at the risk of their own lives, have remained on the spot in order to save from the massacre all those whom they hoped to be able to protect.

Pax Christi International encourages and supports an encounter of Rwandese both inside and outside the country for a frank and constructive dialogue aimed at seeking true national reconciliation. It unreservedly supports the proposal put forward by the European NGO Liaison Committee, in cooperation with Rwandese civil society, for a radio transmitting in kinyarwanda which would broadcast objective information from Europe and instil in the population attitudes of tolerance, dialogue, reconciliation and peace.

Pax Christi International wishes to mention that it has asked the Vatican to give urgent consideration to sending a high-ranking personality of the Catholic Church to visit the warring parties in Rwanda.
